

The dangers facing the Afghan people—especially, especially women and girls—are heartbreaking. The humanitarian crisis may well be historic. But this is also an awful, bungled mess from the perspective of our own national security. The President's own CIA Director told Senators this decision would be certain to inhibit our ability to collect intelligence. Gen. Frank McKenzie of Central Command confirmed this week, this very week, that intelligence collection was already suffering.

The President's top advisers understand very well that the Taliban is capable of retaking control of Afghanistan in just a matter of months. This would allow al-Qaida to reconstitute. So analysts are debating not if, not whether, but when al-Qaida will again threaten the United States from Afghanistan.

Just wait until we see Russia and China rushing into the void, exploiting our retreat to expand their power and influence in Central Asia. Just wait until the botched retreat and lingering threats end up requiring a large, ongoing presence of our military and surveillance forces in the region rather than freeing up resources for the Indo-Pacific. Just wait until the Biden administration ends up consumed with this humanitarian catastrophe in Afghanistan and its destabilizing effects rather than focusing on building coalitions to counter Chinese or Russian aggression.

Yet, amid all this, President Biden isn't reconsidering. Instead, he is flooring it. The administration actually sped up the withdrawal so it can accomplish it even before the darkly ironic deadline of September 11.

So I have forcefully opposed efforts by Presidents of both parties to cut and run from our work in Syria or Afghanistan. I have warned of the huge strategic price America would pay if this administration pretends that terrorists will play nicely with their political timeline. As one recent headline put it, "We might be done with jihadis but they are not done with us."

President Biden and his team are desperate to duck hard questions about Afghanistan, but the American people deserve answers. They deserve to understand the risks of this trajectory and how the Commander in Chief plans to keep us safe against a terrorist enemy that his own senior advisers admit will be allowed to regroup thanks to the President's actions.

I hope that, even in this Democratically controlled Congress, our national security committees will uphold their obligation to oversee this unfolding debacle and its implications. Ending our presence in Afghanistan will not end the terrorist war against us. Sadly, the opposite is likely to be true. This self-inflicted wound could very well make the struggle even more difficult and even more dangerous.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, now on a totally different matter, Senators have just spent 2 weeks traveling our home States and hearing what is on the minds of working families. I got to spend time with all kinds of hard-working Kentuckians across the Bluegrass.

There is no question we are in better shape than we were a year ago. Thanks to the genius of science, the success of Operation Warp Speed, and the bipartisan rescue packages the Republican-led Senate passed in 2020, the year 2021 was primed and set up for a historic American comeback well before the new Democratic Congress or the new Democratic administration was even sworn in.

But Democrats still wanted to rush ahead with the huge borrowing and spending sprees they had promised their far left. Top economists, including famous Democrats, warned our colleagues to think again. Even liberal experts tried to warn our colleagues that the socialist ideas they had drawn up in 2020 were not suited to what Americans needed in 2021. Overspending and overborrowing would unleash inflation, slow rehiring, and hurt small businesses.

All that was predicted, but Democrats rushed ahead. They rammed through what the White House bragged was the most leftwing legislation in our Nation's history, and now Democrats want to follow up with an even more absurd summer sequel.

Well, let me tell you, I just spent 2 weeks hearing from my fellow Kentuckians, and they are already paying a heavy price. Manufacturers are still absolutely hammered by supply chain shocks. Employers large and small say Democrats' special bonus for workers to stay unemployed is badly hampering their ability to fully reopen and to serve their customers. Most of our surrounding States have already put a stop to this awful idea, but Kentucky's Governor, regretfully, hasn't.

It isn't just for-profit businesses, either, that are having trouble getting people back to work. I heard from one residential treatment center for pregnant women and new moms grappling with substance abuse. They said that because of the generous Federal bonus for staying home, they have had trouble finding enough support staff to even reopen one of their facilities post-COVID. About 80 percent of the people who schedule an interview don't even show up.

These backward bonuses have also invited heaps—heaps—of fraud. In California, for example, a significant share of the State's COVID unemployment benefits were paid out fraudulently, billions and billions of dollars to people who shouldn't have gotten them at all. And now—get this—Democrats want to give the California labor secretary who was in charge of that nightmare a promotion. In fact, we are scheduled to vote on her confirmation today to a leading position at the Department of

Labor. You really can't make this stuff up.

And then there is inflation. Just this morning, we learned that runaway inflation has continued to hit working families and hit them hard. Consumer prices spiked in June considerably more than had been forecast. Inflation is up 5.4 percent year over year—the fastest jump in 13 years. Stunningly, it is up 0.9 percent just month over month. Families are feeling it everywhere, from the supermarket to the gas pumps, to housing, to the used car lot, and beyond—all thanks in part to the Democrats' half-baked spending spree from the springtime. Now they want an even more absurd, even more damaging summer sequel.

What Democrats say they want to force through this summer through reconciliation would make our current inflationary mess look like small potatoes. Nobody seriously thinks our country needs another gigantic overdose of overborrowing, overspending, and overtaxing.

This isn't what the American people voted for, either. Our distinguished colleague, the junior Senator from Vermont, the chair of the Budget Committee, has been very transparent about his socialist ideology for decades, very upfront about it, but the country didn't elect a 50-50 Senate and a President who claimed to be a moderate so that Chairman SANDERS could turn America into a socialist country.

Working Americans know that is not what they voted for. This summer they will see who wants to borrow and spend trillions more dollars for no reason and who would rather help them get their jobs back, their stable prices back, their small businesses back, and their lives back.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Uzra Zeya, of Virginia, to be an Under Secretary of State (Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip is recognized.

CHINA

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, last night I had an interesting dinner. Senator CHRIS COONS of Delaware and I joined two Republican Senators, and we met for dinner with eight Ambassadors from Central and South America. It was a rare occurrence which we